6. Leisure & Culture

Minneapolis' identity begins with its name, "city of water," chosen by the first wave of settlers who made the city their home. As Minneapolis matured, its natural beauty has been maintained by preserving public access to the Mississippi River, lakes and parklands that weave through many city neighborhoods. Parks programming offers a wide range of choices for people from all walks of life to find the facilities they need to enjoy indoor and outdoor activities all year long. At the same time, the city's prominence, not only as a regional economic center but one of the most dynamic and creative arts communities in the nation, has added another facet to Minneapolis' image of itself. Arts and cultural events bring a world of entertainment, learning and exploration closer to home than any other city in the Upper Midwest region. These qualities distinguish the city from most of its neighbors and are highly cherished by residents. Together they contribute significantly to the livability of the place we call home.

- 6.1 Minneapolis will identify, protect and manage environmental resources so that they contribute to residents' experience of nature, the parks system and the city.
- 6.2 Minneapolis will develop and support a system of urban parks and 'greenway' connections throughout the City.
- 6.3 Minneapolis will offer a diverse range of programming and recreational facilities for resident use.
- 6.4 Minneapolis will make parks secure, attractive places and ensure that these facilities are accessible, enjoyable and safe.
- 6.5 Minneapolis will continue to promote the economic and creative vitality of arts activities based in the city, both as a regional center for art with an international presence as well as a unique arts environment that responds to local specialty interests.
- 6.6 Minneapolis will continue to support the role of arts in tourism and community pride.

Introduction

Minneapolis, the "City of Lakes," takes its name from the many glacially-shaped lakes linked by creeks and feeding into the region's extensive river system. The abundance of water prompted the first residents of the city of Minneapolis to name their home the "City of Waters" from an Ojibway word for water "minne" and the Greek root "polis" for city. The lakes have traditionally served as the city's identifying feature, in part because of the wise choice made by some of the city's earliest citizens to dedicate lakefront property as public parklands.

Over time, the city has also become known throughout the region as a dynamic and creative center for the arts and culture. Minneapolis has become a cultural capital in the Upper Midwest, known for its theater, dance, gallery exhibitions, arts education, creative media, music and sporting events. Non-profit arts organizations, arts education and the for-profit or commercial sector of the arts have all flourished in the state in the last decades. Philanthropic organizations with a long established tradition of giving have consistently supported events and sponsored venues connected to cultural celebrations and arts activities. A spirit of volunteerism and community engagement, as well as the relative isolation people experience have also served to explain the community's history of support for the arts of all types.

identity

The city's parks, recreational programs and arts events involve citizens with the community in which they live. These public resources are essential to the long-term vitality they bring to our community, bringing people together to share activities, knowledge, interests and beliefs. Public places and events are the outdoor and indoor 'rooms' of our city. They offer a multitude of choices that respond to a wide variety of interests, and feed the dynamic of neighborhood participation that nurtures the city's spirit.

the importance of urban green spaces

The "City of Lakes" was not much more than a string of mills, warehouses, shops and homes nestled against the banks of the Mississippi for the first decades of its existence. In the early 1880s, as the city began to grow at a much faster rate than ever before, park designers began to acquire lands around the city's southern lakes and creek system. This system of parkways was initially planned as a series of broad, leafy-treed boulevards and parks connecting the Chain of Lakes with the creek system and bridging the Mississippi River to link Northeast Minneapolis with the rest of the city. Park designers believed then that green spaces were essential to the good health and enjoyment of urban dwellers. Our own experience of the lakes and parklands tells us that the same holds true today. Residents and visitors alike look to the parks as a common resource for play and relaxation, for entertainment and for learning in the case of the Park Board and School District collaborations that have emerged over the last decades. As the focal point of many residents lives, Minneapolis' parks maintain a special place of honor in the urban fabric of city neighborhoods.

a wealth of arts and cultural events in the city

Arts institutions and philanthropic organizations also maintain a long-standing presence in the state, with special emphasis on the Twin Cities area. The community of people involved as funders, patrons, educators, actors, dancers and other arts workers in the city's theaters, galleries and other cultural performance venues have built Minneapolis' nationally recognized reputation as a unique arts

Leisure & Culture 1.6.1

and cultural center. This reputation as a cultural clearinghouse has helped Minneapolis exert a strong pull throughout the Upper Midwest. The connections between arts activities, philanthropic giving and a tangible sense of community are inextricably linked in the State of Minnesota, and the state's largest nonprofit organizations are located in Minneapolis and Saint Paul.

Arts and cultural events in Minneapolis draw residents out of their homes, overcoming the isolation that accompanies increasingly common home-based entertainment activities. Participation in arts activities establishes a different precedent for many residents, and finding the right facilities and programs that fit specific interests is part of the challenge implicit in supporting the arts community in Minneapolis.

The influence arts programming and events have at the individual and community level is tangible, but not quantifiable. Community organizers and artists speak of the power of the arts to deliver messages in a clear and understandable fashion. Arts activities spark creativity and stir the imagination. They allow communication across boundaries in formats that allow people to understand issues that may have been incomprehensible. As such, they make an immeasurable contribution to the quality of life in this city.

landmarks and other significant places

Familiar landscapes and favorite places have an important place in our daily lives. Park lands, playing fields, the creeks and lakes, bike paths and walking trails distinguish themselves because our sensory experience makes such places unique and personally significant. After all, the beauty that people attach to their homes and streets has a great deal to do with their perception and experience of that place. We judge the open and public spaces around us by the same criteria. Landscape, vegetation and foliage, sight lines, a sense of enclosure and privacy in some context or a feeling of openness in others are qualities that impress upon us the distinctive character of a place.

open spaces

The natural features of Minneapolis' parks do have a finite capacity. As residents and non-residents alike discover the appeal and beauty of these accessible public spaces, the parks begin to get stressed by the number of park users and the impact of specific activities on the lakes, parklands, facilities and greenways. Costs associated with maintaining these special public facilities are increasing, and as more and more users pass through the parks system, the burden of responsibility for maintenance and upkeep lies primarily with city agencies.. The best urban parks are designed with these goals in mind, and the continued care and maintenance of parks seek to preserve this experience of nature in an urban setting.

6.1 Minneapolis will identify, protect and manage environmental resources so that they contribute to residents' experience of nature, the parks system and the city.

Implementation Steps

Incorporate protection, conservation and maintenance of the natural environment in the design and operation of parks, streets, open spaces and related facilities.

Provide educational, recreational and stewardship opportunities for people to develop an understanding of and respect for the natural environment

Encourage planting of native vegetation on parklands and green spaces.

Provide and maintain habitat for resident and migratory songbirds and waterfowl, and other wildlife.

Expand the use of alternative energy sources to heat and cool recreational facilities.

Ensure that access to the city's lakes, streams and the Mississippi River continues to be maintained for the benefit of present and future citizens of Minneapolis.

Preserving existing connections and creating new corridors that connect different sectors of the city encourages us to travel by means other than automobile to destinations that were previously unknown territory on residents 'mental maps' of the city. The isolation of neighborhoods along the north side from the Upper Riverfront parklands offers a classic example of the need to build up these connections and corridors. These 'greenway' corridors can serve both as open space for city neighborhoods by providing open, accessible, secure places for residents to recreate, and also as transportation networks, allowing travel by alternative means, such as bicycles. Working more collaboratively with planning and development of the Chain of Lakes regional parks system is an example of the kind of work that can be done to maintain the city's open spaces. Planting boulevards and creating green, landscaped medians beautifies streets and creates an urban amenity in city neighborhoods. It also slows automobile traffic, contributes to a reduction in the tremendous costs involved in maintaining miles of pavement and advances effective stormwater management practices.

6.2 Minneapolis will develop and support a system of urban parks and 'greenway' connections throughout the City.

Implementation Steps

Invest in the greening of boulevards and landscaping along existing parkways and other streets that connect into and supplement the regional parks system.

Preserve former transportation corridors that are intact or largely intact and use them to connect neighborhoods to each other and to major amenities.

Seek and enforce greater financial participation from people who use the regional parks system.

Support reducing reliance on property taxes by seeking out other state resources to support parks and recreational programming.

recreation and the parks facilities

The city's parks and other green open spaces are tremendously appealing to residents because they respond to a variety of interests and needs. Art parks, play lots, athletic fields, parkways, golf courses and ecological conservation areas such as wetlands serve different functions. From bicycle trails to the lakes to the river parkways to park buildings and community centers located in parks, these public resources are well-loved and heavily used in Minneapolis. Some of the facilities inherited by the Park Board, such as the structures at Lake Harriet, Loring Park and Theodore Wirth Park, are historical remnants of past generations. Their preservation and renovation is critical to linking present day park users to their antecedents.

Through the seasons, both indoors and out, residents find the facilities needed for a wide range of sports. Opportunities to play soccer, bicycle, fish, sail, canoe, swim, skate, toboggan, ski, play baseball, basketball or badminton are found throughout the city's neighborhoods. Other indoor facilities, in particular sports facilities for youth and teenagers, must be advocated for the wellbeing of young people in the community. Whatever the game or sport residents choose to play, the city's parks and public facilities will continue to accommodate these choices.

6.3 Minneapolis will offer a diverse range of programming and recreational facilities for resident use.

1.6.2 The Minneapolis Plan

Implementation Steps

Diversify the recreational facilities offered by the city to respond to the wide range of resident interests.

Collaborate and coordinate space sharing maintenance agreements and programming among public agencies.

Encourage the maintenance and rehabilitation of historic park buildings.

Provide sports facilities that are comparable to suburban complexes for the use of teenage sports programming and activities.

park safety and security

In order for residents to make their way safely to parks and open spaces, and to look to the parks as a play space and gathering spot for children, neighbors and friends, the parks must be shown to be safe environments, free from the possibility of harm or threats to individual or community safety. Good design can accomplish a great deal to this end; the siting of park buildings, landscaping, lighting and visual sight lines have much to contribute to making parks safer, more secure places.

6.4 Minneapolis will make parks secure, attractive places and ensure that these facilities are accessible, enjoyable and safe.

Implementation Steps

Use design features that promote safety and security when constructing or renovating park spaces.

Ensure that adjacent land uses contribute to the safety and ambiance of the park.

Provide safe pedestrian crossings at streets adjacent to parks and reduce the speed of traffic and street width where possible.

Maintain public roads and circulation systems to link parks with neighborhood surroundings and provide visual links to passing traffic.

Locate lighting grids in city parks based on standards for safety, aesthetic improvements, capital costs and energy efficiency.

Bring all public buildings into compliance with fire and ADA codes.

Remove environmental concerns and update general building infrastructure needs (roofs, windows, electric systems, telephones).

artistic places & activities

The Twin Cities region has always made a special place for the arts in its midst. Some of the region's arts institutions have a long history in Minneapolis. Only a small handful are profiled in this chapter, but the number of participant institutions and the contribution they make to the community is unparalleled in the Upper Midwest.

In 1904, the Minnesota Orchestra debuted as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. It opened at Orchestra Hall in Downtown Minneapolis in 1974 after performing for many years at the Northrop Auditorium on the University campus. Another example is found in the history of what is known today as the Walker Art Center. Approximately thirty years ago, a visionary artist named Tyrone Guthrie established a theater company in Minneapolis, and the Guthrie today is the leading force in regional theater and serves as the inspiration to countless other theater companies in the Twin Cities. In 1879, T.B. Walker opened a small gallery in his home in Downtown Minneapolis, and later moved it to Lowry Hill. Approximately forty years later, a museum called the Walker Art Gallery opened its doors to the public, at its current Vineland Place address, although the building itself was remodeled and eventually

demolished in the late 1960's to make room for the building that houses the Walker Art Center today. More than one hundred years have passed since T.B. Walker was inspired to establish a gallery for the arts in Minneapolis; today it is renowned throughout the world as a contemporary art center. The leadership and continued inspiration these organizations provide to the arts community as a whole brings distinction and breadth to the artistic resources available in Minneapolis.

As the arts brings people together around issues of common interest, they also make considerable monetary contributions to the immediate economy. The presence of large scale arts institutions like the Walker Art Center, the Guthrie Theater, Minnesota Orchestra, The Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Minnesota Opera and the Children's Theatre Company entices more than 3 million people to attend performances, give courses, and perform in the Twin Cities each year. The Broadway theater market in Minneapolis was recently ranked the sixth largest in the U.S., with significant enabling contributions from the public sector in the form of support and renovation of historic theaters, such as the State and Orpheum in downtown Minneapolis. The Twin Cities dominate the state's film and video production industry. Minneapolis' Office of Film, Video and Recording reports that the state's industry is worth about 249 million annually, employs 5000 Minnesota residents. Furthermore, the music industry in the metropolitan Twin Cities area generates more than 600 million dollars annually, providing a significant talent, economic and employment base to area residents. For the economic and most importantly civic benefits the arts brings to the community that nurtures them,

6.5 Minneapolis will continue to promote the economic and creative vitality of arts activities based in the city, both as a regional center for art with an international presence as well as a unique arts environment that responds to local specialty interests.

Implementation Steps

Enhance the city's unique arts and cultural resources that promote the city's identity within the region and in special 'niches' within the arts community.

Encourage the growth of the film and video industry in Minneapolis by promoting the city to a national film and video production audience.

Position the Arts Commission to act as a liaison between all city agencies that sponsor public arts activities in order to enhance the cultural life and enrich the experience of citizens through the arts.

Develop closer collaboration among the Arts Commission, the Heritage Preservation Commission, the Committee on Urban Environment and the City Planning Commission.

forty ways to spend the day in Minneapolis

Minneapolis is a city shaped by its climate. Its indoor gathering places and outdoor public spaces are imprinted with patterns of daily life that change over the course of seasons. Whether walking along the banks of the Mississippi, jogging on the paths that circle around the lakes in the Chain of Lakes parks system, accompanying children to a ballgame at a neighborhood park or strolling downtown in the Warehouse District and on Nicollet Mall, there is much to be seen and experienced in the city. The city's core vitality is most easily measured by what is visible to passersby, in the form of the arts or the parks system and other special urban places. In the case of some locations, such as the Minneapolis' Sculpture Garden, these two elements come together seamlessly. The art in it is owned and curated by the Walker Art Center, yet city taxpayers own and pay for the maintenance of that public space. Somewhere between the arts and the parks system, two essential facets of urban life,

Leisure & Culture 1.6.3

many people define their own version of rest, recreation and relaxation.

Forty Ways to Spend the Day in Minneapolis

Jog around Lake Harriet.

Visit the Sculpture Garden.

Bike the River Road & the Grand Rounds bike trails.

Shop downtown on Nicollet Mall.

Go on a historic walking tour of the Warehouse District.

See a Broadway show at the Orpheum.

See a Timberwolves game at the Target Center.

Take a tour of historic Nicollet

Visit the Minneapolis Institute of the Arts, for free.

Take a boat ride on Lake Harriet.

Canoe on Lake Calhoun.

Toboggan at Wirth Park.

Golf at Columbia Park golf club.

Shop at 50th and France.

Hang out at one of the city's numerous coffee shops.

Picnic at Minnehaha Falls.

Visit one of the city's many art galleries.

Test paddle a kayak at Lake Nokomis.

Visit historic City Hall.

See the Holidazzle parade on Nicollet Mall and Dayton's Auditorium Christmas exhibit.

Sunbathe at Calhoun Beach. Dine at St Anthony Main. Go see a movie outdoors in Stevens Square Park.

Ice skate at Peavey Plaza.

Rollerblade around the Lake of the Isles.

People-watch in Uptown.

Visit the University of Minnesota's Weisman Museum.

Have dinner at Lyn-Lake and see a performance at the Jungle Theater.

Take a young friend to story hour at the library.

Visit the library's Planetarium Museum.

Fish at Lake Hiawatha.

Play tennis with a friend at the local courts.

Pick up a game of basketball at the neighborhood park.

Attend a lecture at one of the area's universities.

Meet friends at the Ribfest in downtown Minneapolis.

Walk the dog along the Minnehaha Creek parkway.

Commute by bike to work along the Cedar Lake Trail.

Join thousands of others for an outfoor concert on Hennepin Avenue

Buy fresh, locally grown produce at the Farmer's Market.

Walk across the Stone Arch Bridge and see the falls of St. Anthony up close. On special holidays, or on a seasonal basis, cultural events are sponsored throughout the city. Many of these parades, festivals, farmer's markets and arts events are neighborhood based. Others have an ethnic or cultural component to their celebration that draws members of the community from great distances. These celebrations are crucial to linking community groups to the arts, and providing a welcoming, creative environment for self-expression.

6.6 Minneapolis will continue to support the role of arts in tourism and community pride.

Implementation Steps

Promote the arts and entertainment in downtown Minneapolis as a source of economic development and tourism.

Coordinate and facilitate city involvement in school and neighborhood-based arts activities.

putting it together

Minneapolis' unique character is shaped by the interests of its citizens. Every resident, employee, investor and visitor to the city benefits when the public wealth of open spaces, park or school facilities, arts and cultural programming and other publicly supported events is enriched. These resources provide the venues a strong community needs in order for its people to come together to share those interests. Parks and arts events are critical to building bridges of understanding within our community. They offer immediate connections between people who share very similar interests, whether soccer for youth, volleyball for adults, community-based cultural celebrations or art parks sponsored by neighborhood improvement programs.

As Minneapolis matures into a diverse, vibrant city, ensuring that residents have continued access to activities and facilities like our parklands as well as arts and cultural events continues to be crucial for the city's livability. Activities that bring people together and make it easy for people to identify common interests and shared values invites all residents to share in the natural wealth and beauty of the "City of Lakes".

arts & entertainment events

Downtown, the heart of the region, bustles night and day with a range of arts and entertainment activities. Visitors, workers and residents are active patrons of the diverse cultural events located downtown. It offers some of the very best amenities that cities possess, from outdoor markets to sidewalk cafes to world class arts and sporting events. The preservation of historic buildings in the Warehouse District stimulates opportunities for housing, office and other commercial services behind the walls of graceful structures that speak to today's residents of ages past. Public art, in the form of street furniture, murals and sculpture shows residents, workers and passersby that open spaces are cared for and watched over, an important example of civic pride and investment.

1.6.4 The Minneapolis Plan